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REVIEW

CAROL A. DRAY, *Translation and Interpretation in the Targum to the Books of Kings* (P. V. M. Flesher, ed.; Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture 5; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006): xii+230 pages.

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Dray's excellent study began as a dissertation written under Robert P. Gordon at Cambridge in 2002. After a brief introduction, Dray devotes eight chapters to contemporization, toponymy, theology, divine titles, *halakah*, prophecy and instruction, figures of speech, and the relationship between the targum and the Peshiṭta (P). After this, comes a chapter devoted to summary and conclusions; the bibliography; and indices of authors, biblical references, ancient sources, and subjects. The volume, which is part of the new series *Studies in Aramaic Interpretation of Scripture*, is handsomely produced. I noticed very few errors of any sort (only minor problems on pp. 24, 30, 35, 94, 163, 179), which in a technical work such as this is high praise indeed.

The book is aptly titled, since it navigates between both translation and interpretation. Arguing that Targum Jonathan (TJ) to Kings has been understudied, perhaps because it lacks lengthy expansions, Dray sets out to provide a "systematic examination of the entire Books of Kings to establish significant divergences between the Targum and the underlying Hebrew text," comparing these, whenever possible, to other targumim, other versions (esp. LXX, P, and Vulgate), Josephus, and rabbinic texts from the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods (p. 1). The book does not, however, traffic in text-critical lemma with extensive presentation of the

evidence from the various versions (see below). Instead, Dray "concentrates principally on translation equivalents and interpretive renderings that appear to demonstrate the didactic character of the Targum" (p. 2). This interpretive focus on "teaching and preaching tendencies" leads Dray to exclude a number of topics that belong to a full treatment of TJ (e.g., language, manuscript data, certain vocabulary studies) since these are unlikely to cast light on these tendencies (p. 2)—a point that might be challenged.

In her introduction, Dray notes that the targum probably played both liturgical and educational (both private and formal) functions. Regardless, its closeness to the Hebrew text allowed the targumist "to put his own interpretation" on the biblical text even while the end product was differentiated from the sacred base text. Dray proceeds to discuss the tendencies she has discerned in the targum, devoting a chapter to each, typically highlighting the concern for instruction, pedagogy, or didacticism that is often evident therein. To cite a few examples: 1) Vocabulary changes made by the targumist are indicative of a "general tendency to refer to biblical events in terms of his own later experiences" apparently "to make a clearly understandable version of the Bible" (p. 5). Such updates are characteristically anachronistic, retrojecting later terms (e.g., Greek loanwords), customs (e.g., reclining at meals), or even events (e.g., the destruction of the Temple) into the biblical narrative of the targumic version, either in order to make that version more accessible or to keep the later materials "in the mind of the faithful" (p. 5). One notes, for instance, two instances where "prophet" is changed to "scribe" (2 Kgs 17:13; 23:2; see p. 10, further pp. 120–133) or where the targumist uses concrete language to replace figurative terminology (see, e.g., pp. 12–13, 28; further pp. 134–159). 2) Theologically, concepts or doctrines such as the service of God, "fearing sin," and freewill are present in TJ in such a way that betrays a later, more fully developed understanding (pp. 61–72). 3) The use of divine titles, similarly, seems to reflect an attempt to avoid (or prevent) blasphemy and to ensure and increase piety, in part by eschewing anthropomorphisms (pp. 73–101, esp. p. 99). 4) Yet another example, showcasing the emphasis on instruction, is the increased use of נביא, which occurs eighty-eight times in the MT of Kings, but one hundred fifty times in TJ. In this connection, Dray again takes up the two passages where TJ changes "prophet" to "scribe" (pp. 119–120), attributing this change to the establishment of the Hebrew Bible canon (which "seems to have precluded the term prophet being used thereafter" [p. 120]), as well as to the changed perception or form of continued revelation (prophecy), even post-prophets (p. 121). The new locus of revelation is, of course, the scribal office and the process of scripturalization and expert interpretation

reflected therein (see pp. 124, 130): "The means of communication had moved from prophecy to the sages' interpretations of the written body of God's word" (pp. 124–125). But the change from prophet to scribe is not only a contemporizing one; it is also "intended to emphasize his [the targumist's] own position of importance in the community" (p. 133).

Regarding the relationship of TJ and P in Kings, Dray argues that "it was highly likely that the author of P was aware of Jewish tradition" (p. 160). Dray opts for the more general term "Jewish tradition" because, on the one hand, she thinks "[t]here is no evidence that P was influenced by targumic readings" (p. 182). On the other hand (and on the same page), she admits that some of the TJ-P correspondence, while evidencing independent operation on the part of P, nevertheless also indicates that it appears "to have known some targumic renderings" (p. 182; cf. further 189, 191).

The above comments indicate a few of the many merits of this book, which I found both helpful and instructive. Let me conclude with two points of assessment and critique.

1. While the book is aptly titled, one occasionally feels as if, in the attempt to cover both translation and interpretation, one does not quite get enough of either. As already mentioned, close text-critical assessment with standard presentation of the Versions in lemma or tables is actually quite rare in the book: at this point the *translation* part of the book's title seems a bit under-presented. Said differently, one will need to look to other resources for standard text-critical presentation of the data and analysis thereof. In my opinion, however, the benefits of attending to *interpretation* outweigh this problem, because interpretation is far more interesting—and infinitely more readable—than text-critical lemma. The rub, of course, is that insights into interpretation (especially interpretive *difference*) hang more than a good bit on the translation issues. If these latter are under-treated, then one wonders about the accuracy of the interpretation. That concern having been raised, my own assessment is that Dray's interpretation is reasonable, even if at times it is under-argued. Clearly, hers is a well-documented and wide-ranging study and likely to stand for some time as well as to generate additional studies, including (one hopes) more from her own pen.

2. The last paragraph of the book begins as follows: "It has not been possible to consider in detail the origin and dating of TJ Kings" (p. 192). In my estimation this is the largest lacuna in the volume as Dray does not come down on the question of provenance. Even so, data or comments pertinent to TJ's provenance are peppered throughout the book (see, e.g., pp. 6–7, 10, 18, 19, 20, 23–31, 33, 47, 58, 61, 65, 107, 120, 129, 131–132, 188–189, 191–192). These concern everything from targumic knowledge of the Roman occupation, the destruction of the Temple, prayer

practices, Arab tribes, or the Babylonian language (!); various traces of the Hellenistic-Roman or rabbinic (often unspecified) periods; Josephus and P knowing (something of) the targum; the formation of the canon; Roman taxes; and Greek and Persian loanwords—to name a few. Not all of these data are consistent—the pertinence of prayer after 70 C.E. (p. 61) contrasts with pre-70 C.E. data (e.g., p. 192). In the end, Dray seems to argue (albeit tentatively) for eastern influence and the absence of any mention of post-70 C.E. events in the targum. Nevertheless, despite G. Vermes' (see pp. 47–48) and C. T. R. Hayward's (see pp. 131–132) attempts to argue for pre-70 C.E. composition on the basis of specific word usage (certain uses of "kings" and "scribe," respectively), Dray admits that the targum "cannot be dated securely on such slender evidence" (p. 192).

There can be little doubt that *absolute* certainty regarding the provenance of a text like TJ Kings will probably forever elude researchers. Even so, without at least some *relative* specificity regarding time of composition (or of underlying traditions), many of Dray's comments concerning the interpretive force of TJ data appear vacuous. Consider, for example, "[t]he Targumist adds elements of traditional theology from his own time to his translation . . ." (p. 61) or "[i]t [the targum] might . . . be assumed to include renderings that were in line with *halakic* practice at the time of its composition" (p. 102). What is this "traditional theology"? Whence does it come? Ditto on halakic practice. Similarly, what is the targumist's "own time" or the time of the targum's composition? These comments (along with Dray's subsequent judgments) appear to indicate knowledge of the time of the composition or of the targumist or of halakic practice or of traditional theology; however, such knowledge is never made manifest and so one is left in the dark (and also left somewhat dubious) about the merit of the interpretative judgments that are rooted in exactly these comments. It would have been exceedingly useful, therefore, if Dray would have summarized the data pertinent to provenance in her last chapter, offering some adjudication of these. Barring that, it is hoped that she will offer exactly such a study in article form sometime soon.

These two points of assessment and critique notwithstanding, Dray has given us an excellent book that is essential reading for all subsequent researchers. She has set us an example for how to make text-critical study of the targums lively, interesting, and hermeneutically significant. In so doing, her volume makes a signal contribution not only to the study of TJ Kings, but to the study of the targumim in general. So, even if additional work remains to be done, it is obvious that, when it is, Dray's volume will be indispensable and at the ready.